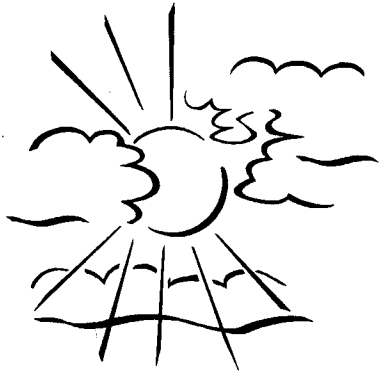


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\*Important story at this spot

# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Tuesday, June 21, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Published June 21, 2005  
Lansing State Journal

## **Groups challenge Medicaid cuts Advocates want GOP to rethink reduction plan**

By Amy F. Bailey  
Associated Press

Health care groups and advocates for the poor said Monday they want Republicans who control the state Legislature to look at other ways to balance the state budget without cutting assistance and health care for the poor.

A coalition of nine groups did not specifically call for a tax increase to adequately fund Medicaid and welfare in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, but a few said the state cannot continue to reduce spending year after year to offset declining revenue.

"We've just gone through three years of finding short term solutions," said Spencer Johnson, president of the Michigan Health and Hospital Association.

"We're going to be out of short term solutions. We're at the train wreck stage. Someone is going to have to take responsibility to do the hard thing."

Johnson was among several representatives at Monday's news conference in the Capitol who criticized budget proposals approved in recent weeks by the state House and Senate.

The \$39.7 billion proposal approved by the Republican majority in the House would end Medicaid coverage to about 13,000 poor single 19- and 20-year-olds and 30,000 people who get their benefits because they take care of a low-income child on Medicaid.

It also would cut off welfare benefits Jan. 1 to recipients who have received aid for four or more years.

Opponents of the proposal, including Democratic Gov.

Jennifer Granholm, said the changes will leave more people without any insurance, making them more likely to wait for treatment and then only get it at expensive emergency rooms.

With more uninsured patients, hospitals will look elsewhere for revenue, which could mean higher health care premiums for those with coverage.

The Republican majority in the Senate took a different approach to the Medicaid program, but did not make major policy changes to the welfare program in its spending proposal.

### **Medicaid plans**

Here are highlights of Medicaid proposals approved by the Republican majorities in the state House and Senate for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1:

#### **In the House**

- End Medicaid coverage to about 13,000 poor single 19- and 20-year-olds and 30,000 people who get benefits because they take care of a low-income child on Medicaid, known as caretaker relatives.

#### **In the Senate**

- Cap enrollment in programs that offer benefits to the 19- and 20-year-olds and caretaker relatives, begin charging some recipients \$60 per year in premiums, and charge higher co-pays for brand name drugs.

They voted to save money on Medicaid by capping enrollment in programs that offer benefits to 19- and 20-year-olds and the so-called "caretaker relative" group. Some Medicaid patients would pay an average \$60 per year in premiums along with higher co-pays for brand-name drugs.

"Even though it's not much, it's a way for everyone to help solve this problem," said Ari Adler, spokesman for Republican Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema of Wyoming.

"For people that talk about more revenue, where is this revenue supposed to come from? You either raise taxes or you scale back in other areas of the budget.

"We have nearly a \$40 billion budget, and raising taxes was not an answer. That's \$40 billion we already receive."

Paul Long, vice president of public policy for the Michigan Catholic Conference, said the cuts to Medicaid and welfare were easier than working to eliminate the structural deficit.

"The easiest thing in the world to do is to slash programs that cover people who don't really have a voice in this legislative body," Long said at Monday's news conference.

"The hard thing is to look at other places in the budget or other ways."

Michigan Report  
June 20, 2005

## **STATE HEALTH GROUPS DECRY MEDICAID FUNDING CUTS**

One wouldn't think of Jessica Ewing as a typical Medicaid recipient, but many groups say she is one of millions in Michigan that could be affected by proposed Medicaid funding cuts.

The 19-year-old is pursuing a degree at Michigan Technical College and is spending her summer taking classes at Lansing Community College and working for House Minority Leader Dianne Byrum (D-Onondaga).

But beneath the surface is a woman who could be a victim of the proposed Medicaid cuts in the Republican's proposed state budget, opponents of that budget said. Because Ms. Ewing's father is laid off and mother is disabled, she was under Medicaid up until her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Her coverage did help her during a two-month bout with strep throat. But when she turned 19, Ms. Ewing was no longer eligible for her family's Medicaid. She applied for the Q program, which provides Medicaid to 19- and 20-year olds, and was denied because of the state's current freeze on enrollment for people of that age.

"If I get sick again, I'll have to quit school and my parents will have to file bankruptcy to pay for my health care," said the Mason resident. "It's hard to take in."

Ms. Ewing was among the many protesting the Legislature's proposed cuts to Medicaid, which would affect 19- and 20-year olds, children and the elderly. Ms. Ewing joined nine state organizations Monday in a press conference to discuss the effects of the proposed cuts and who would be hurt.

Governor Jennifer Granholm and the Senate have called for a freeze on new enrollment for 19- and 20-year-olds in Medicaid. The House budget (HB 4831) would end Medicaid coverage for 19- and 20-year-olds, including those currently covered.

The House and Senate versions also call for Medicaid recipients to pay premiums and co-pays for their coverage.

The Senate version (SB 267) also attempts to modify behavior of Medicaid recipients by including a new personal responsibility pledge Medicaid recipients would have to sign in order to minimize the monthly premium they will be charged, if the state is given authority through a federal waiver. Under the pledge, Medicaid recipients would have to

agree not to smoke, not to abuse drugs, have their children immunized and have annual health assessments.

Despite that, the advocacy groups at the press conference were not pleased with the proposal. Paul Long of the Michigan Catholic Conference said it is easy to just slash funding for those who don't have a voice in the Legislature, but everything should come second to the welfare of needy citizens.

"The clear indication of the moral strength of a society is the assistance it provides to its neediest citizens," Mr. Long said. "Unfortunately, budget proposals moving through the Legislature related to Medicaid do not provide such a statement. We call upon members of the Legislature to work ardently and cooperatively to ensure Michigan's most vulnerable residents are given preferential treatment as next year's budget continues to be drafted."

Spencer Johnson, president of the Michigan Health and Hospital Association, opened and closed the news conference by chastising the Legislature for balancing the budget on the backs of needy citizens, a claim with which many Democrats have agreed.

Rep. Bruce Caswell (R-Hillsdale), chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Department of Community Health, has said the new and higher co-pays are only fair considering what taxpayers pay to provide Medicaid coverage.

Various statistics reported by the group show that one in seven Michigan residents rely on Medicaid.

"It would be a terrible, terrible thing to cut our health care," Ms. Ewing said.

# **GOP budget hits state's neediest**

Sunday, June 19, 2005

CARL WILLIAMS GUEST COLUMNIST

The Republican budget recently passed in the Michigan House Appropriations Committee and by the full House of Representatives puts corporate needs over the needs of our children.

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm offered a balanced budget that struck the proper balance between cuts and eliminating corporate tax breaks. The Republican budget is irresponsible socially and fiscally.

Rather than eliminating some out-of-date corporate welfare laws, the Republicans would rather raise fees on 35,000 kids in the MiChild health program and move them into health maintenance organizations -- creating barriers to access.

They prefer to throw 43,000 of our neediest residents off state health care -- increasing costs on all of us. A Families USA study concludes that premiums for a Michigan family with private employer sponsored health care are \$730 higher than they otherwise would be due to the number of uninsured in our state. For the single Michigan worker it is \$274 more. By 2010, those figures climb to \$1,170 and \$420, respectively. The extra costs of the uninsured place a burden on all working families, all businesses and the entire health care community. By insuring less, we all pay.

House Republicans brag about cutting welfare, but the reality is after the 1990s reform, the only people they are really cutting are 13,000 adults, predominantly working women raising two children (almost 30,000 children total) making less than \$8,000 a year. Additionally, the \$39 million cut for child day-care services and inspections further puts children at risk. We need more quality care for our kids, not less.

Instead of putting people to work, Republicans are forcing people to stay on welfare, increasing costs to the state. Slashing home care benefit waivers threatens to kick seniors out of their homes and into nursing homes. This results in diminished quality of life for seniors and a greater cost to the public.

When people are thrown off state health care, forced to use emergency rooms because they cannot afford co-pays and are kicked out of their homes into expensive nursing homes, all taxpayers foot the bill. Real family values are not just empty rhetoric or election year slogans. Real family values are caring for kids, seniors and the poor -- the least among us. Our energy is best spent on good public policy, not partisan pandering. We can ill afford to protect corporate tax breaks while throwing children off health care, shredding our social safety net and doing away with the tools our unemployed need to get back to work.

Charging fees on the children and poorest among us, increases costs on us all, and turning our back on \$260 million federal matching funds is fiscally irresponsible and socially unconscionable.

The Republican budget has put corporate tax breaks over real family values. For the record, all Democrats serving on the House Appropriations Committee voted "no" on this bill in committee, and all Democrats in the House voted "no" on this bill on the House floor.

This bill was not a bipartisan effort.

State Rep. Carl Williams, Democrat of Saginaw, represents the 95th District

# Finding common budget ground

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

State lawmakers are working out the differences between House and Senate versions of next year's \$40 billion state budget. The GOP-controlled Legislature avoided increasing taxes by imposing additional co-pays for Medicaid recipients and cutting off families on welfare after four years.

That prompted an outcry from some Democrats and Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm, who called the cuts cruel. Granholm's budget proposal would have preserved funding for welfare and Medicaid, with some tweaks, but would have imposed a new tax on physicians to fund health care programs for the poor.

The lines are clearly drawn, yet both sides will have to find room for compromise as Michigan steers toward a balanced budget. The truth is, as more Michiganders lose their jobs and the state collects less revenue, hampering its ability to provide for the poor and unemployed. Something must give.

The Republicans concede their plan includes some tough choices -- cutting more than 15,000 families and 36,000 children off assistance by imposing a four-year lifetime limit on benefits. Many other states already limit the number of years families can remain on welfare. Welfare reform rules approved during the Clinton administration allowed states to set limits on welfare benefits. So there might be some savings within the state's welfare ranks. But no family with children should lose benefits if the adult can't work because of poor health or a mental condition. A lifetime ban on welfare after four years strikes us as too rigid -- particularly for those who truly are too vulnerable to work. The GOP plan also cuts \$50 a month from the maximum welfare payment. With increases gasoline prices and other energy costs, cutting the monthly benefit is cruel. Welfare families struggle hard enough; most are households headed by women with children.

The state's Medicaid rolls are another matter.

Asking Medicaid recipients to pay a \$5 monthly copay, a \$3 copay for office visits or to pay more for brand name drugs isn't unreasonable. Most private insurance plans demand copays. And with one in seven Michigan residents now relying on Medicaid for coverage, the state, in essence, has become the biggest provider of health care insurance. It's hard to avoid cuts or more copays to an item that consumes about 26 percent of the state's general fund budget.

Under the Republican budget plan, Medicaid recipients would also pay a lower premium for coverage if they agreed to not smoke, to exercise regularly and make other healthy lifestyle choices.

Granholm is correct, however, that the vulnerable and poor shouldn't suffer because lawmakers don't want to impose a tax on physicians. The copays, while not unreasonable on their face, are in essence taxes on the needy. She has promised to veto any GOP bill that balances the budget on the backs of the needy.

Republican lawmakers and Granholm agree on increasing funding for education and maintaining funding for local governments. That leaves cuts in other areas or increased taxes as the option.

Both sides should give and do what's best for all of Michigan -- including the vulnerable.

A small, targeted tax increase and minimal copays on Medicaid can get the state where it needs to go. Shrill partisanship and a slavish anti-tax stance won't. It's time to find common ground.

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

## **Woman charged in child abuse**

### **Canton Twp. day care provider is accused of hurting 2-year-old girl while she bathed her.**

By Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

**CANTON TOWNSHIP** -- A day care provider faces charges of criminal sexual contact and child abuse involving a 2-year-old girl.

Police and prosecutors allege Nancy Podorsek, 43, of Canton Township became angry when the girl soiled herself, and then abused the child while bathing her.

Podorsek was arraigned on a second-degree criminal sexual conduct charge, which does not involve penetration, on Friday in 35th District Court in Plymouth. She also was charged with third-degree child abuse.

A plea of not guilty was entered on her behalf.

The mother of the child noticed bruising around the girl's genitals after bringing her home from the Podorsek home, according to Canton Township Police Detective Chad Baugh.

The mother took the girl to the hospital, where doctors confirmed the bruising, Baugh said.

The toddler was not seriously injured, Baugh said.

"(Podorsek) became upset that the baby (soiled herself) and during the bath she caused the injury to the child," Baugh said.

"It was a reckless act more than a deliberate act. It was a tense moment for her; she was angry.

"Part of the (criminal sexual conduct) statute addresses humiliation," Baugh added.

"The humiliation, the injury and the state of mind of the defendant is what resulted in the (criminal sexual conduct charge.)"

Police talked with other parents and children involved with the now closed in-home day care center, and found no evidence of other abuse at the home, Baugh said.

State Department of Human Services spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet confirmed that Podorsek's day care center has an active license.

There is no record of problems at the home, Sorbet said.

Podorsek, who is free on bond, could not be reached for comment Monday.

*You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or [kbouffard@detnews.com](mailto:kbouffard@detnews.com).*



# Dad faces murder charges

Monday, June 20, 2005

By Larry O'Connor loconnor@citpat.com -- 768-4926

A 26-year-old Blackman Township man was expected to be arraigned this afternoon on murder charges in the death of his 14-month-old daughter.

This morning, District Judge Charles Falahee signed a warrant charging Shawndale Clark with open murder, felony murder and first-degree child abuse in the death of Amaree Gail Mathis. Blackman Township public safety officers arrested the father Friday after an autopsy revealed the toddler died from multiple injuries, including blunt-force trauma to the back of the head that caused hemorrhaging.

The baby's left lung also was punctured, said Detective Chris Boulter, of the Blackman Township Department of Public Safety.

Clark was caring for the child while the mother, Jacqueline Mathis, was at work from 3 p.m. to midnight Thursday. The mother returned home for 15 minutes and then went out with friends for a couple of hours, Boulter said.

About 9:40 a.m. Friday, Blackman Township authorities were called to the couple's home in the 2900 block of Pheasant Run Drive after the child was unresponsive. The infant was pronounced dead at the scene.

The infant may have "been dead for some time," Boulter said in a sworn statement.

The infant also had abrasions to the face, which the mother said weren't there the previous day, said Tom Finco, director of the Department of Public Safety.

**SEX ABUSE SUIT****District to settle in case of girls' molestation**

The attorney for Warren Consolidated Schools district will work out a financial settlement with the attorney for three girls who said teacher James A. Kearly molested them eight years ago, the district announced Friday.

Robert Freehan, communications director for the district, said the agreement means the school district no longer will be involved in the case. The district's insurance provider will pay the settlement.

Kearly was convicted in 1999 of touching the girls inappropriately when they were in grades 1-3 and he was a gym teacher at Siersma Elementary School. He spent 90 days in jail and is now a registered sex offender. A year later, the girls' parents filed a lawsuit against school district officials, who they said allowed Kearly to transfer from a middle school to an elementary school in 1995 despite documentation of inappropriate sexual behavior.

In December 2004, a federal jury awarded each of the girls more than \$700,000 in compensatory and other damages.

William Seikay, who represented the girls, said the new agreement does not alter the fact that Kearly was found guilty or that Warren Consolidated administrators were negligent.

"They're clearly intending to imply that they were found not to be responsible," Seikay said.

He added that the agreement will "look out for the best interests of the girls."

The district never appealed the case.

By Dan Cortez

# Day care nightmare for teen parents

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

West Ottawa school officials should rethink a decision to close the doors to their Little Paws day care program. For a decade, the program at West Ottawa High School has helped teenage parents stay in school by providing free, on-site care for their babies. It's the kind of program whose worth can't be measured in just dollars and cents.

With West Ottawa trying to cut its budget by \$1.3 million, the day care program has become a casualty. But the program's \$30,000 cost pales in comparison to the long-term benefits it provides the young people it serves. Educators should use every resource and option at their disposal to keep at-risk students on the path to earning a high school diploma. It will increase their chances for success in adulthood.

High school dropouts are less likely to find and hold jobs that pay enough to keep them and their children off public assistance. The unemployment rate for dropouts is about 75 percent higher than for high school graduates, according to the U.S. Department of Education. A lifetime of economic difficulty likely awaits teens who don't finish high school, especially those with the added responsibility of children to support. Helping them prepare for a better future, now, makes more sense than providing welfare support later.

The fact that the program doesn't serve a huge number of students doesn't mean it can be lopped off without being

missed. This year, nine teens and their nine babies and toddlers were served by the Little Paws program. Four of the students are graduating. This fall, six students were expecting to use the school day care program, which also provided parenting classes and served as a lab for students taking child development courses.

Nearly 80 teen parents have made use of the Little Paws program since it opened in 1995. Students from Zeeland, Grand Haven and Holland high schools have attended West Ottawa High through the Schools of Choice program because of it. If budget woes are the reason for the program's demise, West Ottawa High Principal James Nicolette ought to broach the idea of running Little Paws as a regional program with other school districts in Ottawa County, sharing costs.

State day care licensing regulations stipulate that each adult worker have no more than four babies to tend. A joint venture could open the program for more teens. There are plenty who could use the service. In 2003, the last year for which statistics are available, there were 356 pregnant girls in Ottawa County between the ages of 15 and 19. Options that can keep more of those girls in school ought to be expanded, not cut.

# Child Care Center gets reprieve, for now

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

SUSAN J. DEMAS THE SAGINAW NEWS

A few weeks after Deontae Tyus, then 7 months, started attending the Carrollton Child Care Center, his parents learned he needed a kidney transplant and specialized care.

His mother, Cathy Henderson, planned to quit her job at Consumers Energy in Saginaw to care for him, but then the center's staff stepped in. Day care workers routinely give Deontae, now 212, doses of bicitra to regulate his kidneys -- and plenty of tender loving care.

"When we found out, we were like, 'Who's going to take care of this little baby?' But they have just been excellent," said Henderson, whose son is waiting for a transplant at University of Michigan's Mott Children's Hospital.

The Carrollton Township customer service representative got some good news Monday from Carrollton Board of Education members, who decided against axing the center's infanttoddler room and two jobs to balance a \$14 million general fund budget for the 2006 fiscal year.

Board members voted 6-1 to table discussion until their next regular meeting Monday, July 18. Secretary Mark Miller was opposed.

Vice President Mark Doozan charged center Director Karen Rahn with forming a committee of staff and parents to eliminate the \$32,600 shortfall the day care is projected to run next year.

"You have to find some way to break even. This has been an ongoing thing that's lost money," said Doozan, referring to the center's six straight years of deficits. "If this was a business, you certainly wouldn't do things this way."

Rahn said adding 3-year-old preschool would boost attendance and bring in additional funds to "carry" the infant toddler program, which has 10 children ages 6 weeks to 212. A total of 100 children up to 10 years old have signed up for all-day and before- and after-school programs.

Susan J. Demas is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach her at 776-9688

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# Woman arrested in stabbing of boyfriend

POLICE BLOTTER

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, June 20, 2005

By Ken Palmer [kpalmers@flintjournal.com](mailto:kpalmers@flintjournal.com) • 810.766.6313

FLINT

A woman was jailed early today after allegedly stabbing her live-in boyfriend during an argument.

The victim told police his girlfriend was angry because he had come home late after watching the Detroit Pistons basketball game, police reports said.

As they argued, she grabbed a knife and stabbed him with it.

The man was taken to Hurley Medical Center after the incident at their home on W. Pierson Road, near Industrial Avenue, which happened about midnight Sunday. He was listed in fair condition.

The woman was arrested on an assault charge and lodged in the Genesee County Jail.

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June 21, 2005

# Sam's cuts food gifts

## Store cuts program for second time

By TOM CARR

Record-Eagle staff writer

TRAVERSE CITY - Sam's Club has again sliced a program that provided day-old baked goods to local churches for meals for the needy.

It's the second time in two weeks the massive retailer's local store cut the food program, and the latest decision came from corporate headquarters, volunteers for local shelters said.

"It provided all the desserts for our meals," said Major Thomas Riggs, pastor of the Salvation Army in Traverse City. The church offers community lunches there three times a week and serves about 50 to more than 100 people at each meal, he said.

Traverse City's Sam's stopped giving bread, cakes and other food to the charities early this month, but reversed the decision a few days later. A local official said then that Wal-Mart corporate officials decided to halt the program, but it was resumed by an official at the local store.

Sandra Svec, who collects donated food for Trinity Lutheran Church, said a manager told her Friday that local Sam's stores "just can't make that final decision."

Laurie Grabe, a manager at the Traverse City Sam's Club, a members-only discount store and division of world's largest retailer Wal-Mart Stores Inc., would not verify the reports and referred the Record-Eagle to corporate offices.

Corporate spokeswoman Jolanda Stewart cited a long-standing policy of not giving away outdated items due to safety concerns.

The policy will be revised on Jan. 1, Stewart said Monday. She would not say whether it will allow stores to donate food.

Other area stores contribute to meal programs, though volunteers said Sam's portions were larger than the smaller, local chains.

Officials at Oleson's Food Stores don't worry about liability when they give food to charities, co-owner Brad Oleson said.

"If I thought there was any question that anyone would get sick on it, I would never give it away," he said. The chain donates breads, rolls, sweets and some produce.

"The reason I call it day-old is I don't want the customers to take it home and expect it to be fresh in three days," he said.

Community programs for the needy tend to consume perishables more quickly than that, he said.

Riggs said volunteers will bake more cakes and desserts or find other donors.

"We're certainly thankful for what they've provided in the past," he said.

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

A Child Is Waiting

## **Check out Adoption Festival**

By Rosemary Dorr / Special to The Detroit News

Kinship's 16th annual Adoption Festival will take place 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday at St. Vincent/Sarah Fisher Center, 27400 W. 12 Mile at Inkster Road in Farmington Hills.

Kinship, a collaborative network of 24 private and public child-placing agencies in Metro Detroit, seeks to make the public aware of the number of foster children who need permanent families.

In the state of Michigan, approximately 4,022 children need permanent homes, with about 50 percent of these children living in Metro Detroit. At the Kinship Adoption Festival, potential adoptive families have the opportunity to meet some of these waiting children and also have a chance to talk with adoption workers.

As a result of last year's festival, 12 children were matched with families.

The Adoption Festival, which is free, includes food, activities for the children as well as informational workshops.

For more information, call Linda Noble at (313) 531-3140, the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange at (800) 589-6273 or e-mail [www.adoptionfestival.org](http://www.adoptionfestival.org).

*A child is waiting appears Tuesdays in Features.*

June 20, 2005

## **Kids in legal gray area when gay couples split**

By Richard Willing, USA TODAY

Two women in El Dorado County, Calif., Elisa Maria B. and her domestic partner Emily B., decided they wanted a family.

So when Emily became pregnant by means of a sperm donor and gave birth to twins in 1998, the lesbian couple faced a lifestyle choice. Emily, the couple decided, would stay home with the kids, one of whom had Down syndrome and required constant care. Elisa would be the breadwinner.

Court papers omit the women's last names as standard procedure to protect minors in cases about parenthood.

The couple split up 18 months later. Elisa cut off financial support, prompting Emily and her children to go on welfare. El Dorado County sued Elisa for child support, and she refused to pay. Her argument: I'm not the children's father.

Sometime this summer, the California Supreme Court will rule on the case of Elisa and Emily and two similar appeals. At issue: In same-sex relationships, what makes a person a parent? Is it biology, existing legal standards or whether that person acts like a parent?

If Elisa and Emily had been an unmarried heterosexual couple, their dispute probably would have been resolved already. In California and other states, courts look at how such couples define their relationship to determine parentage.

In California and elsewhere, unmarried same-sex couples that split up have begun asking courts to treat them like heterosexuals in matters of child custody.

### **Wide potential impact**

Family law professor Ed Stein of Cardozo Law School in New York City says the three cases are especially important because courts in other states are likely to be guided by California's example.

The cases come as assisted-reproduction technology becomes more readily available to same-sex couples.



The 2000 Census found about 92,000 same-sex couples in California. As of December, though, only 29,000 had registered under a state law that permits same-sex couples to enjoy most legal rights available to heterosexual couples. The law does not address the parental rights issues raised by these cases.

And the use of assisted-reproduction technology, including donated sperm, in vitro fertilization and donated fertilized eggs, is rapidly increasing. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 45,751 babies were born through assisted reproduction in 2002 — a 120% increase from the 20,840 in 1996.

Similar legal cases are working their way through the courts in Utah, Georgia and Washington state. In Colorado last year, a state appellate court granted visitation to the former partner of a lesbian who had adopted a baby from China. Courts in New York, Vermont and Pennsylvania have ruled that both partners of same-sex couples who split may be considered parents.

"Reproductive technology is running so far ahead of law and policy," says Emily Duskow, a Berkeley, Calif., attorney who is editor of *A Legal Guide for Lesbian and Gay Couples*. The California cases, she says, are a sign "the law is trying to keep up."

#### Variations in cases

The California cases, which were argued May 24 before the state Supreme Court in San Francisco, differ in their details:

- In the case of Elisa B. and Emily B., a trial court agreed that Elisa is not the twins' legal father and has no child-support obligations. A state appeals court reversed that decision and said that Elisa should be granted visitation rights as well as be compelled to help support the children.

At the California Supreme Court, Elisa's attorneys cited state law and an earlier appeals court decision involving heterosexual couples to argue that a non-biological partner cannot be considered a parent.

In legal papers, Emily's lawyers pointed out that the couple had named the children as beneficiaries on life insurance policies and had even shared breast-feeding duties. Acting like a parent, they argued, creates parental rights and duties.

- In *K.M. v. E.G.*, a case from Marin County, north of San Francisco, a fertilized egg from K.M. was implanted in E.G., who had twins in 1996. When the couple broke up in 2002, E.G. denied K.M. access to the children. She cited a waiver of parental rights K.M. signed when she donated her egg.

Relying on the waiver, two lower courts held that K.M. is not a legal parent. At the state Supreme Court, K.M.'s lawyers argued that how the couple lived — both functioning as

parents — should trump the waiver. To decide otherwise, K.M.'s lawyer Jill Hersh wrote, would harm the children.

- In *Kristine H. v. Lisa R.*, a Los Angeles case, one partner in an eight-year relationship had a daughter through artificial insemination. Before the girl was born, the birth mother, Kristine, sought and received a court judgment that Lisa was the legal father and that both partners were the parents.

About 21/2 years after the child was born, the couple separated. Kristine asked the court to void the judgment and rule that Lisa had no visitation rights. An appeals court agreed with her. At the state Supreme Court, Kristine's attorney, Honey Kessler Amado, argued that she never intended to grant her then-partner full paternity rights.

Lisa's attorneys, Leslie Shear and Diane Goodman, countered that the court judgment and Lisa's subsequent behavior as a parent entitled her to visitation.

Adoption not involved

None of the couples in these cases had adopted the children. Courtney Joslin, the lawyer for Emily B., says in all three cases, the children's "birth into the world came about because of the intentional conduct of two people" — the partners. "That's what we think is most important here," says Joslin, a senior staff attorney for the National Center for Lesbian Rights.

Stein, of Cardozo Law School, says that argument has a good chance of succeeding.

During oral arguments before the state Supreme Court, Stein says, some justices seemed convinced that "fairness" requires them to extend parental rights to gay, non-biological partners. Other justices, Stein says, seemed to believe that extending parental rights strengthens families and better protects children.

"The (legal principle) here is that the reality of a relationship is determined by its functionality," Stein says. "That's a direction in which the law, generally speaking, is headed."

# Special effort aims to cut dropout rate

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

By Rick Wilson The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The leaders of Steelcase and Alticor are backing a new program aimed at keeping teens in school, turning around Grand Rapids Public Schools' high-school dropout rate, which stands at more than 30 percent.

Backers of the West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology planned a press conference today, touting the formation of a program they believe will help more students go on to college. The group includes Steelcase President James Hackett and Alticor President Doug DeVos, who are trying to raise \$4.5 million to open the new center, at 98 E. Fulton St., in September.

The project, which also has the backing of Grand Rapids Superintendent Bert Bleke, has about \$3 million in pledges for a learning facility meant to convince kids that adults are serious about helping them succeed.

The center will be patterned after the Bidwell Training Center in Pittsburgh, Pa., which has a 30-year record of success.

"A big focus is putting people in a world-class environment and treating them with respect," said James Welch, a former Steelcase executive and president of the center's board of directors. "If we can create a different environment, we'll get a different behavior."

The Bidwell Center has helped improve Pittsburgh's public school dropout rate, which once was about 30 percent.

Now, Pittsburgh boasts a 90 percent graduation rate. Welch said more than 75 percent of those kids now go on to college.

Not a traditional arts program, the idea is to captivate kids through the arts and technology while teaching them to succeed, one victory at a time.

Steelcase spokesman Brian Cloyd, whose company along with Alticor has put up some of the cash, told about a pilot program last fall at Union High School where students were assigned to take photos and conduct interviews with veterans and wound up getting a history lesson.

The program will offer free, for-credit classes twice a week after school to students from all four city high schools. The selected students will be recommended by school administrators. The goal is to begin with 100 ninth-graders in classes in black and white film photography and digital imaging.

That program will be coupled with one for adults -- also free -- which partners Spectrum Health, Saint Mary's Health Care and Metropolitan Hospital to train in a 33-week course unemployed or underemployed workers in medical coding.

In keeping with the Pittsburgh program's philosophy, that field was chosen because area hospitals said it's their greatest immediate need for workers.

Plans are to reward participants' success in the classroom with jobs at area hospitals. Welch called the concept "social entrepreneurship" where job training is offered based on real community needs.

"The worst thing you can do is train somebody and then they can't get a job."

# Experts question wisdom of sex offender restrictions They may pose more risks to society if they can't find a job and establish stable lives.

By Michael Hill / Associated Press

June 21, 2005

**ALBANY, N.Y.** -- The clamps are coming down on released sex offenders like never before.

Laws restrict where they can live, Web sites list their names, satellites track their steps. Neighbors and bosses force them from their homes and jobs.

The tightening of restrictions around the country comes after several recent slayings of children, allegedly by released sex offenders. The crackdown is aimed at protecting youngsters.

But some experts wonder if sex offenders are being pushed so far to the fringes that they could actually become more dangerous to society. Some researchers and treatment providers say that sex offenders are finding it harder to maintain homes and jobs and establish stable lives for themselves.

"I would rather have someone who has committed a sex offense be going to work every day, come home tired, have a sense of well-being that comes from having a regular paycheck and a safe home, as opposed to having a sex offender who has a lot of free time on his hands," said Richard Hamill, president of the New York State Alliance of Sex Offender Service Providers. "You tell me: Who is at a greater risk of reoffending?"

Sex offenders have always been pariahs. But it has become harder for them to slip back quietly into communities since states began adopting versions of Megan's Law a decade ago. The laws, named for Megan Kanka, a 7-year-old New Jersey girl who was killed by a neighbor in 1994, created public registries of convicted sex offenders.

In a study published this year, researchers surveyed 183 sex offenders in Florida and found 27 percent said they lost a job because a boss or co-workers found out about their crime, 20 percent had to move from their home because a landlord found out, 15 percent had to leave after neighbors complained, and 33 percent were threatened or harassed by neighbors.

"I feel trapped in living where I do," one of those surveyed said.

Another said: "I welcome an early death."

Co-author Jill Levenson, a professor at Lynn University in Florida, said "psychosocial stresses" have been linked to repeat offenses among criminals. Advocates fear the recent tightening of restrictions could add to their stress.

Some states now track selected sex offenders by global positioning satellite.

Michigan offenders

- About 1,900 of Michigan's registered sex offenders -- 1 of every 10 on the state listing available to the public -- live in close proximity to a school, a Detroit News examination found.
- The public registry includes about 19,000 of the state's roughly 36,000 convicted sex offenders, who are required by law to tell the police where they live at least once each year. Juveniles and some others are excluded from the public list.

After a registered sex offender was accused of killing a 9-year-old girl in Florida, the state passed a law requiring certain child molesters to submit to a lifetime of satellite tracking. Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm has said she wants state lawmakers to set up 1,000-foot "predator-free zones" around schools.

Earlier this month, Miami Beach, Fla., all but banned child molesters from moving there, adopting an ordinance barring them from living within 2,500 feet of schools, school bus stops, day care centers, parks or playgrounds.

Maureen Kanka, who became an advocate for Megan's Laws after her daughter's slaying, said she sees the value in a balanced approach to dealing with sex offenders that includes treatment. But she said that providing information about offenders' whereabouts -- whether through registries or tracking devices -- should be the No. 1 priority.

Published June 21, 2005

## **Former president helps Lansing gain 4 homes Area Habitat group joins building push by Jimmy Carter**

By Nicole Jacques  
Lansing State Journal

Four local families will have new houses of their own by the end of this week, thanks to a statewide home-building spree led by former President Jimmy Carter.

Lansing's Habitat for Humanity office normally needs a full year to finish four homes. But support spurred by the high-profile volunteer project has put it well ahead of its usual construction pace.

"It's pretty huge," Executive Director Denise Paquette said. "In six months, we'll have done what we essentially did in 12 months in past years."

Volunteers were busy hanging doors and painting walls at one downtown Lansing site Monday, while Carter donned a hard hat alongside Gov. Jennifer Granholm and U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow in Benton Harbor.

The Lake Michigan city and Detroit are host sites for this year's Jimmy Carter Work Project, an annual push to build affordable housing.

But Lansing is among 63 affiliates in Michigan and Windsor participating in the fast-track effort to finish 238 new homes.

The special project has garnered extra support from state and federal officials.

One of Lansing's soon-to-be-completed houses, at 1142 Kingsley Court, is the nonpartisan pet project of Granholm's staff, state lawmakers and other state employees.

On Monday, Lansing Habitat staff members accepted a \$5,000 donation to cover some of the project costs from Congress Building America, a partnership between Congress and Habitat for Humanity International.

Mohamed Hussein said receiving the keys to one of two new ranch homes on Leslie Street will be a dream come true.

The Somalian man has wanted to build his family of five's future in the United States in something more than their small apartment. But he can't afford it on his own.

"They've helped me a lot," said Hussein, a tailor who has lived in the U.S. for six years.

Lansing's pool of volunteers plans to finish two more homes this summer.

Local Habitat officials hope churches, school groups and businesses will help keep this year's production increase going.

It takes more than 3,000 volunteer hours and about \$75,000 to build each single-family home.

The organization wants to build 10 houses per year by 2010.

"This is our jumping off point to do that," Paquette said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. Contact Nicole Jacques at 377-1066 or [njacques@lsj.com](mailto:njacques@lsj.com).

### **Habitat for Humanity: From the ground up**

Habitat for Humanity of Lansing has built 55 homes for low-income families since it was established in 1987. Here are some facts about the process:

- Interested families fill out an application. Selections are based on financial need, current housing conditions, ability to repay the no-interest mortgage and willingness to support the project. Single-adult families must give 300 hours of sweat equity; double-adult families must contribute 500 hours.
- The office receives about 300 inquiries a year and about 50 applications before choosing four or five eligible families. Two committees and the board screen applications.
- Most building sites are donated by local individuals or groups, sometimes in exchange for paying back taxes. Currently, the organization has a shortage of potential properties.
- Volunteers provide about 3,000 hours of labor. Habitat hires contractors to install the foundation, furnace, plumbing, electrical wiring and carpet.
- Projects usually start with a five-day blitz, then take about two or three months to finish.
- It costs about \$75,000 to build each house.
- The average house is a 1,050-square-foot, three-bedroom ranch with one bathroom and a full basement. Whirlpool donates a new range and refrigerator for each home.

# Former president helps city build housing for 24 homeowners

Tuesday, June 21, 2005

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BENTON HARBOR -- Tanisha Wilson was impressed by the energetic way former President Jimmy Carter pitched in Monday to help build a house on East High Street.

As one of hundreds of volunteers participating in a Habitat for Humanity project to blitz-build nearly 90 homes across Michigan this week, Wilson had the chance to work on the same home as Carter.

"He is awesome. He's here to work. Don't get in his way," said Wilson, who came to southwestern Michigan from Louisville, Ky., where she was once homeless and is now making a career as a singer.

She performed a song, "Home," written by a friend, as part of ceremonies held Sunday night at Lake Michigan College to kick off the 2005 Jimmy Carter Work Project.

Accompanied by his wife, Rosalyn, his daughter Amy and other members of his family, Carter, 80, was to work in Benton Harbor through today.

The Carters will be in Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, on Wednesday and Thursday and return to Benton Harbor on Friday to help 24 new homeowners dedicate their homes.

Meanwhile, Habitat for Humanity volunteers will be putting up homes in communities across Michigan, including nine houses in Kalamazoo, as part of the former president's work project, which is building a total of 238 homes this year.

"This is the most promising and dedicated and well-organized community I've ever seen," Carter said of the Benton Harbor part of the project.

With the backing of the Benton Harbor-based Whirlpool Corp. and efforts of many others, Benton Harbor is working to repair what was lost and to build for a better future following a riot that erupted on June 16, 2003, the former president said.

"Miracles have happened in Benton Harbor in the last two years," Carter said.

Residents of Benton Harbor said one of those miracles took form early Monday as the sounds of saws cutting wood and hammers pounding nails filled the air.

After a brief ceremony, volunteers from all over the country began to construct homes on several streets south and east of downtown, not too far from where the troubles occurred in 2003.

"This is going to bring up the neighborhood. It will get good people moving in," said Jim Williams, 69, sitting on an upended pail and watching Habitat volunteers raise the roof for a home next to his home on Thresher Avenue.

Not too far away, on Winans Street, Angela Doyle was helping a crew from Willow Creek Church near Chicago carry parts of wall across what would soon be her front lawn.

A 32-year-old mother of four children, Doyle had given up trying to purchase a home of her own. But then last year she learned Jimmy Carter was coming to town. At the urging of a friend, she applied to buy a Habitat home, was accepted and is now helping to put up the house.

"Habitat has opened up a door of opportunity for people who want to do better and to have nicer things in life," said Doyle, who just landed a job as a building inspector for the city of Benton Harbor.



She says her sons are looking forward to having their own bedrooms in the new, 1,100-square-foot home. She is eager to start working in her yard. "I'll actually be able to have a garden," she said.

Etta Harper, a Benton Harbor City Commission member, says the joy of the work project comes in the smiles and gratitude of women, such as Doyle, who have longed for years to have their own homes. "They have been let down so much," Harper said. "This is like Christmas for them." Among those attending the press conference with Carter was Gov. Jennifer Granholm. She, too, took a break from pounding nails to talk about the work project.

"Jimmy Carter is a hero of mine," she said. "He is a man who has really tried to be focused on building community. He has a heart as big as his smile."

With Carter's help, Benton Harbor is moving in the right direction, she said.

"Benton Harbor is a community fertile with possibility," she said. "What is happening here this week is symbolic, but it is also real."

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# State honors volunteer

Monday, June 20, 2005

By Chad Livengood [clivengood@citpat.com](mailto:clivengood@citpat.com) - 768-4945

Rosemarie Herbert's passion for consoling the poor, battered and abused has earned her state recognition.

The 77-year-old Jackson resident is the 2005 winner of the Gov. George Romney Lifetime Achievement Award for Volunteerism.

Herbert credited her husband, Desmond, 10 children, strong faith and friends for motivating her to extend a helping hand.

"All my life, the presence of God had led me to those circumstances where I could be of service," she said Sunday in an e-mail. "All this work is from God and for him."

She is an active member of Universalist Unitarian Church in East Liberty.

Herbert received the award Saturday night from Gov. Jennifer Granholm at an awards banquet in Dearborn sponsored by the Michigan Community Service Commission.

"Volunteers are truly the heroes of our state," Granholm said in a statement. "They give unselfishly of their time and talent and ask for nothing in return."

Herbert by all accounts has logged countless hours for the Community Action Agency's mediation program, sexual and domestic assault help lines, the Jackson Interfaith Peacekeepers and numerous other area organizations.

Granholm, her husband Daniel Mulhern and former first lady Rosalyn Carter presented seven other volunteerism awards at the banquet.

Herbert, the only Jackson County resident among 40 finalists for the awards, said the other award winners have made their communities better from emotional, physical, economic and spiritual sacrifices.

"These people decided it was worth it again and again, over and over, for years," said Herbert, who was nominated by CAA staff and volunteers.

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